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INFO RUEHXK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 000869

SIPDIS

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STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD
WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR ABRAMS
CMC WASHINGTON DC FOR POLAD

JERUSALEM ALSO FOR ICD
LONDON FOR HKANONA AND POL - TSOU
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PREL KMDR KPAL KWBG KPAO IS

SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (5/21): "THE TWO-STATE SOLUTION:
EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY"

Main Stories:

Front and inside pages of all dailies are blanketed with positive reports of the Palestine Investment Conference. Al-Quds opens with Palestinian Prime Minister Fayyad stating that, "having President Abbas open the conference is a success in and of itself," adding, "this is an opportunity for us to show the real face of Palestine and to tell the world that we are able to deliver." The dailies highlight coverage on American participation at the conference. Al-Quds runs a Reuter's story entitled, "The US is optimistic about the Bethlehem conference." The story quotes Robert Kimmitt, Deputy Secretary of the US Treasury stating that the goal of the conference was to get the attention of investors for investment opportunities through several specific projects. Official daily Al-Hayat Al-Jadida opens its economic page with a quote by US Consul General Walles stating, "the US is committed to supporting the Palestinian economy." On-line Palestinian news outlets Ma'an, PNN and Ihbariat also carry comments by the Consul General regarding US participation and optimism on the eve of the conference.

The dailies report that four people were killed in Gaza following an Israeli airstrike on May 20. Related coverage of a possible truce between Hamas and the Israelis includes comments by an Egyptian official that, "Israel has agreed to the Egyptian version of a truce agreement in Gaza."

The dailies extensively cover the participation of Palestinian President Abbas at the May 20 opening of the "right to return" monument in Aida refugee camp in Bethlehem. Abbas said, "We are determined to say to the world in each and every speech, that the right to return is a holy right that will not be delayed or

postponed."

Al-Quds' front page highlights Israeli-Palestinian negotiations with statements by Israeli diplomatic sources confirming that negotiations are continuing and focused on the issues of borders, refugees and security. The report adds that there are talks about a, "delayed agreement." In related news, a May 20 telephone call between Palestinian President Abbas and Secretary Rice receives front page coverage in all dailies. The dailies highlight that Abbas briefed Rice on the latest developments in the peace process.

BLOCK QUOTES:

¶11. Independent Al-Ayyam runs an editorial entitled, "The Torah speech of Bush at the Knesset and the secularism of the American State," by Muhammad Shaker Abdullah (5/21): "The United States was established... by groups who were escaping religious persecution in Europe in the seventeenth century. They found, in the American land, the only shelter from religious persecution that was available... the American Revolution of 1776 resulted in the creation of a constitution that protects freedom of expression and secularism... The constitution was based on secularism by separating religion from the state and by giving full rights to everyone ... the comments by George W. Bush clearly reflect the Christian-Judeo tradition. This does not reflect the nature of his country or American society. Bush's first priority as president should be to fairly and without bias represent the United States, even if he happens to have been born or inherited certain beliefs or traditions..."

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¶12. Official daily Al-Hayat Al-Jadida carries an op-ed entitled, "Talk about resignation!" By Yahya Rabah (5/21): "...we have been hearing rumors lately about the resignation of President Abbas... these rumors are bad, and they constitute an open invitation to everyone to get depressed. It looks like President Abbas is blaming himself... for a failure that wasn't his fault, but rather the fault of others. Let us assume that 2008 ends without reaching the desired solution for the establishment of a Palestinian state... then the failure will be Bush's and his republican government's that declared his two-state solution in Annapolis. Bush is the one who has assistants who feed him with regular and accurate reports about Israeli behavior: settlements, security and military operations that are destroying the two-state solution... If the negotiations with the Israelis that are headed up by President Abbas encounter difficulties... that will not only have a negative effect on the Palestinians. The whole region will suffer the consequences... including Israel. Therefore, the responsibility [for success in negotiations] belongs to everyone..."

WALLES